“We are not enemies”

The interview which Die Zeit refused to publish

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Yesterday, a nice journalist from DIE ZEIT rang me. She’s writing an article about different perspectives from Jewish people living in Germany.

She had learned about the Jüdische Stimme (Jewish Voice for Peace) and thought it would be an “important voice in this context.” About half an hour later, we had the following telephone conversation:

– *Yesterday (19th October)*

Hello, my name is —- What is yours?

Hello, I’m Udi.

That’s a nice name. Where are you from?

From Haifa. A city between Tel Aviv and Beirut.

It must be currently very difficult for you. How are you feeling?

Yes, it is. For a long time I’ve been asking myself the same question. I don’t know.

I understand. May I record the conversation?

Yes.

What do you mean when you say that you are anti-Zionist?

It’s to do with my understanding of Zionism. I understand Zionism as a state ideology which considers Jewish supremacy in Israel/Palestine to be a prerequisite. I am against such an ideology because it is racist and therefore illegitimate.

You have already said that you are afraid to wear the Kuffiyeh in public. But you do it anyway. What does this mean for you?

I am afraid. Above all I’m afraid of the Berlin police’s readiness to use violence. I wear the Kuffiyeh as a symbol of a resistance movement. Resistance against a politics which systematically marginalises, demonises and dehumanises Palestinian people.

But I’m more than just the Kuffiyeh. I am also Jewish. I am an Israeli. I am also influenced by Zionism. For many years, Zionism was the only perspective that I knew. I am queer in this respect. I’m not exactly that which people see at the first view.

At the moment, there is only space for binary descriptions. Either Palestinian or Jewish. And that is a symptom of the problem. Germany's political élite again and again play us off against each other. As if we were fundamentally enemies. But we are not enemies. Are we even allowed to say this?

You have summarized that nicely. Thank you. I think that was all we ned. We would like to publish it soon. Would you prefer to be anonymous?

No, it's fine.

— *Today (20th October)*

Hi Udi, it's —– again. Udi, I am really sorry, The editors have rejected the interview with you.

Does this affect all the interviews which you carried out for the article, or just the interview with me?

Just with you. The editors said, they can't publish this, because you support BDS.

What has that got to do with the interview?

I am really sorry. I found your views really important. I am very sorry.

I'm also sorry.

Look after yourself.

This article was originally posted in German (but not in die Zeit). Translation: Phil Butland. Reproduced with permission.